



NEWS FROM **SENATOR TED KENNEDY, JR.**

Majority Whip

12TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

Chair: Environment

Ranking Member: Internship

Member: Public Health; Transportation

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SENATE SET TO CONSIDER GROUNDBREAKING POLLINATOR PROTECTION LEGISLATION

Bill will be the most comprehensive pollinator health law in the nation

HARTFORD, CT - On the eve of Earth Day, members of the Environment Committee were joined by Mark Creighton, the state bee inspector, to announce bipartisan support for legislation that will better protect Connecticut's pollinators. Connecticut's bee inspector was on hand to explain the importance of pollinators to agriculture and the economy, which have been threatened by mass die-offs of bees and other pollinators around the globe. Connecticut beekeepers lost nearly 60% of their honey bee colonies last year, after losing around 50% of their colonies per year for the last several years.

"The evidence is clear. Bees and other pollinators are dying off at an alarming rate, putting at risk both our economy and our ability to grow food," said **Senator Kennedy** (D-Branford), Senate Chair of the Environment Committee. "The bipartisan bill we are planning to pass today tackles this problem head-on. We are cutting down on the use of the toxic chemicals that experts believe are most responsible for pollinator deaths while also planting vegetation that will help these populations rebound. Pollinator die-off is a major environmental crisis, and I'm proud that we were able to reach across the aisle and find innovative solutions this problem at no cost to taxpayers."

"It's pretty simple - we need pollinators for food production. Without the help of the bee population, which is being threatened by colony collapse disorder, we run the risk of endangering our agricultural viability. This bill is a strong, multi-pronged approach to pollinator health that will serve as a national model for protecting these important contributors to our food web," said **Representative James Albis** (D-East Haven), House Chair of the Environment Committee.

"The role of bees and other pollinators in our environment is undeniable, unavoidable and, until recently, largely unprotected" said **Representative John Shaban** (R-Redding), Ranking Member of the Environment Committee. "I am proud to be a part of this state's continuing effort to protect our environment while also managing and effectively promoting our natural resources."

SB 231, An Act Concerning Pollinator Health, seeks to encourage the development of pollinator habitats while limiting the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, which are believed to be largely responsible for colony collapse disorder and the worldwide die-off of bees, butterflies, and other pollinators.

Connecticut's pollinator habitats have been declining for decades. This is largely due to suburban sprawl, manicured suburban lawns and the growth of "monoculture" farms,

where only a single crop is grown throughout huge fields. Without a range of crops providing a wide variety of flowers blooming in succession throughout the year, bees do not have enough food to eat, leading to whole colonies dying of starvation.

The provisions of this bill will promote population growth among pollinators by creating new foraging habitats for them. The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) will establish a model pollinator habitat guide. This guide will be used by the state to identify future development opportunities that will increase pollinator habitats. The Department of Transportation will also be tasked with identifying areas along state highways where turf grass can be replaced with pollinator vegetation. Vegetation identified in the model pollinator habitat will also be planted on overhead transmission line rights-of-way land.

The legislation introduced by Environment Committee members also prohibits the application of the most toxic subclasses of neonicotinoids to certain trees or blossoming plants. These neonicotinoids have been identified as one of the largest contributors to pollinator die-off. Last week, chemical giant Ortho joined the ranks of pesticide and herbicide companies that are phasing out their use of neonicotinoids. Home Depot, Lowe's and other retailers have taken similar steps to phase out sales of these chemicals. The bill also requires that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and CAES establish best practices for neonicotinoid use and label certain neonicotinoids as "restricted use" pesticides.

Honey bees are responsible for about 80% of pollination worldwide. Their pollination is necessary for the production of two thirds of the top human food crops, which supply about 90% of the world's nutrition. It is estimated that honey bees contribute about \$15 billion to the United States economy each year. Without pollination, the United States could experience a serious food shortage and economic losses.

Connecticut has 56 farms producing fruits, nuts or berries with a value of over \$27 million, plus 398 farms producing pumpkins. All of these farms are dependent on honeybee pollination.